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From: Debbie Sweeney  
DPS/Michael Ancram  
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C.C.R.U.

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B  
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir David Fell - B  
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Stephens - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mr Brooker (B&L) - B  
Mr Hill - B  
Mr Lavery - B  
Mr Maccabe  
Mr Buchanan - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mrs Collins - B  
Mr Haire, DED  
Mr Canavan, CCRU

*PA - Meetings with Church leaders file*  
*Mr Canavan*  
*Mr Perry*

Mr McVeigh - B

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LEADERS: DINNER AT HILLSBOROUGH ON TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY**

The Minister was grateful for the briefing provided for his dinner at Hillsborough Castle on Tuesday night for leading members of the Presbyterian Church. At the dinner were the Presbyterian Moderator, the Right Reverend Dr Harry Allen, the Reverend Sam Hutchinson, General Secretary and Moderator-designate, and the Reverend Dr Warren Porter. Convenor of the Forces Committee of the Presbyterian Church (he is also an Assistant Grand Master of the Orange Order). You and I were also present.

Summary

2. Although there is little of substance to report from the dinner, which was informal and relaxed with the guests, perhaps, a little subdued, most of the current issues were aired and the

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Minister's responses accepted without disagreement. The Moderator lifted the veil a little on last year's attempt by the Church Leaders to broker a deal at Drumcree.

Detail

3. The Minister first congratulated the Reverend Hutchinson on his nomination to succeed the Right Reverend Dr Harry Allen as Moderator. The Presbyterians expressed sympathy for Mr Moss and his family on their bereavement.

4. Harryville - The Moderator said that it was proving difficult to establish the individual who was leading this continued, unacceptable protest. Reverend Porter said it was attended by thugs who took an hour off from the pub to hurl abuse at worshippers; he also thought, having had the media spotlight turned on his involvement, that Billy McCaughey had had 'his wings clipped' and might shy away and thereby, hopefully, improve the situation.

5. North - Reverend Porter said that he was not sure that an independent commission was the solution to the parades problem and he thought it would be impossible to implement the procedures over the next few months which would be a crucial period for extremely sensitive negotiations. He implied that any further formal response from the Orange Order would likely be critical. Reverend Hutchinson kept his counsel, whether or not that implied a possible similar view from the Presbyterian Church was unclear. The Minister explained in some detail the purpose of the further consultations, and also agreed that the Commission itself could not be a panacea and emphasised again the need for mediation and agreement locally.

6. USA - Reverend Hutchinson asked the Minister whether the perceptions of most Americans on the Northern Ireland situation were still of the nationalist view. The Minister said that from his own US travels the recent visits by Unionists to the USA, in an effort to sway the balance of perception on the Northern Ireland situation, had been a useful counter-balance but that more could still be done

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to redress particularly the Irish-American perception. Discussion also centered on the relationship between the British and US Governments.

7. The Moderator said he was making an extensive trip to the USA, which also took in Washington, for 3 weeks in April. Mr McVeigh indicated that if the office could assist generally or specifically through the NI Bureau and which might help smooth his visit then he should not hesitate to get in touch. The Moderator, who appreciated the offer, agreed to pass on his itinerary details nearer the date of his departure.

8. Bloody Sunday - The Moderator merely agreed with the line taken by the Secretary of State on Bloody Sunday, and there was no prolonged discussion on the subject.

9. Boycotting - Reverend Hutchinson asked the Minister for an update on the boycotting of businesses. The Minister, keeping to standard lines, said there were indications that boycotts were on the wane. Reverend Porter agreed.

10. Talks - The Presbyterians, who did not raise this topic, had little to say after the Minister provided an update on the current position of the Talks, which would, he told them, be 'parked' before the election. In a response to a question from Mr McVeigh, Reverend Hutchinson reiterated that the Presbyterian Church adhered to its 'no contact with Sinn Fein' policy, although individuals were free, and some such as Jack Weir and Godfrey Brown did, to do otherwise.

11. Drumcree - *Always add meeting of Garvagh.* When asked about the Church Leaders role at Drumcree last year, the Moderator said that after coming very close to a deal last year, only for it to fall apart at the last minute, discussions must take place early on with the parties involved and a local agreement made. He thought the Garvagh Road Residents had decided they need not do anything last year, erroneously as it turned out, and hoped they might learn from that lesson. He said, given that Brendan McKenna was not acceptable as a negotiator to the

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Orange Order, that he should stand down as a representative at least until negotiations had got well underway. Mr McVeigh pointed out that he might very well be an elected representative after the May Local Government election. The Moderator also said that from his ongoing conversations with members of the Orange Order that last year's paper on Drumcree promoted by the Church Leaders could be resurrected. Both he and Reverend Porter had been surprised at how far the orangemen were prepared to compromise (giving up all future 12 July parades on the Garvaghy Road) to retain the Drumcree church parade. If a solution was found, and he was reasonably optimistic that it could, to resolve Drumcree it would be the **key**, he thought, to settling all other parades issues. The others agreed.

Other Matters

12. Before the end of the evening the conversation touched upon other topics of a more social and general nature, including the churchmen expressing appreciation both of their visits to No 10 and of the Prime Minister and the attention that he gave to Northern Ireland. They warmly thanked the Minister for a very enjoyable evening and for his updates on the current situation. The Minister responded in kind.

(SIGNED)

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